

Well, my Legitimate, if this Letter speed,
And my inuention thrive, Edmond the base
Shall to th' Legitimate: I grow, I prosper:
Now Gods, stand vp for Bastards.

Enter Gloucester.

Glo. Kent banish'd thus? and France in choller parted?
And the King gone to night? Prescrib'd his powre,
Confin'd to exhibition? All this done
Vpon the gad? Edmond, how now? What newes?

Bast. So please your Lordship, none.

Glo. Why so earnestly seeke you to put vp y^e Letter?

Bast. I know no newes, my Lord.

Glo. What Paper were you reading?

Bast. Nothing my Lord.

Glo. No? what needed then that terrible dispatch of
it into your Pocket? The quality of nothing, hath not
such neede to hide it selfe. Let's see: come, if it bee no-
thing, I shall not neede Spectacles.

Bast. I beseech you Sir, pardon mee: it is a Letter
from my Brother, that I haue not all ore-read; and for so
much as I haue perus'd, I finde it not fit for your ore-look-
ing.

Glo. Giue me the Letter, Sir.

Bast. I shall offend, either to detain, or giue it:
The Contents, as in part I vnderstand them,
Are too blame.

Glo. Let's see, let's see.

Bast. I hope for my Brothers iustification, hee wrote
this but as an essay, or taste of my Vertue.

Glo. reads. This policie, and reuerence of Age, makes the
world bitter to the best of our times: keeps our Fortunes from
vs, till our oldnesse cannot relish them. I begin to finde an idle
and fond bondage, in the oppression of aged tyrannies, who sways
not as it hath power, but as it is suffer'd. Come to me, that of
this I may speake more. If our Father would sleepe till I wak'd
him, you should enioy halfe his Reuennew for euer, and line the
beloued of your Brother. Edgar.

Hum? Conspiracy? Sleepe till I wake him, you should
enioy halfe his Reuennew: my Sonne Edgar, had hee a
hand to write this? A heart and braine to breede it in?
When came you to this? Who brought it?

Bast. It was not brought mee, my Lord; there's the
cunning of it. I found it throwne in at the Casement of
my Cloister.

Glo. You know the character to be your Brothers?

Bast. If the matter were good my Lord, I durst swear
it were his: but in respect of that, I would faine thinke it
were not.

Glo. It is his.

Bast. It is his hand, my Lord: but I hope his heart is
not in the Contents.

Glo. Has he neuer before founded you in this busines?

Bast. Neuer my Lord. But I haue heard him oft main-
taine it to be fit, that Sonnes at perfect age, and Fathers
declin'd, the Father should bee as Ward to the Son, and
the Sonne manage his Reuennew.

Glo. O Villain, villain: his very opinion in the Let-
ter. Abhorred Villaine, vnaturall, detested, brutish
Villaine; worse then brutish: Go sirrah, seeke him: Ile
apprehend him. Abominable Villaine, where is he?

Bast. I do not well know my L. If it shall please you to
suspend your indignation against my Brother, till you can
deriue from him better testimony of his intent, you should
run a certaine course: where, if you violently proceed a-
gainst him, mistaking his purpose, it would make a great
gap in your owne Honor, and shake in peeces, the heart of

his obedience. I dare pawne downe my life for him, that
he hath writ this to feele my affection to your Honor, &
to no other pietece of danger.

Glo. Thinke you so?

Bast. If your Honor iudge it meete, I will place you
where you shall heare vs conferre of this, and by an Auri-
cular assurance haue your satisfaction, and that without
any further delay, then this very Euening.

Glo. He cannot bee such a Monster. Edmond seeke
him out: winde me into him, I pray you: frame the Bu-
sinesse after your owne wisedome. I would visitate my
selfe, to be in a due resolution.

Bast. I will seeke him Sir, presently: conuey the bu-
sinesse as I shall find meanes, and acquaint you withall.

Glo. These late Eclipses in the Sun and Moone por-
tend no good to vs: though the wisedome of Nature can
reason it thus, and thus, yet Nature finds it selfe scour'd
by the sequent effects. Loue cooles, friendship falls off,
Brothers diuide. In Cities, mutinies; in Countries, dis-
cord; in Pallaces, Treason; and the Bond crack'd, 'twixt
Sonne and Father. This villaine of mine comes vnder the
prediction; there's Son against Father, the King falls from
byas of Nature, there's Father against Childe. We haue
seene the best of our time. Machinations, hollownesse,
treacherie, and all ruinous disorders follow vs disquietly
to our Graues. Find out this Villain, Edmond, it shall lose
thee nothing, do it caretully: and the Noble & true-har-
ted Kent banish'd; his offence, honesty. 'Tis strange. Exit.

Bast. This is the excellent foppery of the world, that
when we are sicke in fortune, often the sufferers of our own
behaviour, we make guilty of our disasters, the Sun, the
Moone, and Starres, as if we were villaines on necessitie,
Fooles by heauenly compulsion, Knaues, Theeues, and
Trachers by Spherickall predominance. Drunkards, Ly-
ars, and Adulterers by an inforc'd obedience of Planetary
influence; and all that we are euill in, by a diuine thru-
sting on. An admirable euasion of Whore-master-man,
to lay his Goatish disposition on the charge of a Starre.
My father compounded with my mother vnder the Dra-
gons taile, and my Natiuitie was vnder *Vrsa Maior*, so
that it followes, I am rough and Leacherous. I should
haue bin that I am, had the maidenleft Starre in the fir-
mament twinkled on my bastardizing.

Enter Edgar.

Pat: he comes like the Catastrophe of the old Comedie:
my Cue is villanous Melancholly, with a sigh like *Tom
o'Bedlam*. — O these Eclipses do portend these diui-
sions. Fa, Sol, La, Me.

Edg. How now Brother Edmond, what serious con-
templation are you in?

Bast. I am thinking Brother of a prediction I read this
other day, what should follow these Eclipses.

Edg. Do you busie your selfe with that?

Bast. I promise you, the effects he writes of, succede
vnhappily.

When saw you my Father last?

Edg. The night gone by.

Bast. Spake you with him?

Edg. I, two houres together.

Bast. Parted you in good termes? Found you no dis-
pleasure in him, by word, nor countenance?

Edg. None at all.

Bast. Bethinke your selfe wherein you may haue offen-
ded him: and at my entreaty forbear his presence, vntill
some little time hath qualified the heat of his displeasure,
which at this instant rageth in him, that with the mis-
chief

chief of your person, it would scarcely alay.

Edg. Some Villaine hath done me wrong.

Edm. That's my feare, I pray you haue a continent
forbearance till the speed of his rage goes slower: and as
I say, retire with me to my lodging, from whence I will
silly bring you to heare my Lord speake: pray ye goe,
there's my key: if you do stirre abroad, goe arm'd.

Edg. Arm'd, Brother?

Edm. Brother, I aduise you to the best, I am no honest
man, if ther be any good meaning toward you: I haue told
you what I haue seene, and heard: But faintly. Nothing
like the image, and horror of it, pray you away.

Edg. Shall I heare from you anon?

Exit.

Edm. I do serue you in this businesse:

A Credulous Father, and a Brother Noble,
Whose nature is so farre from doing harmes,
That he suspects none: on whose foolish honesty
My practises ride easie: I see the businesse.
Let me, if not by birth, haue lands by wit,
All with me's meete, that I can fashion fit,

Exit.

Scena Tertia.

Enter Gonerill, and Steward.

Gon. Did my Father strike my Gentleman for chi-
ding of his Foole?

Ste. I Madam.

Gon. By day and night, he wrongs me, euery howre
He flashes into one gross crime, or other,
That sets vs all at ods: Ile not endure it;
His Knights grow riotous, and himselfe vpbraides vs
On euery trifle. When he returns from hunting,
I will not speake with him, say I am sicke,
If you come slacke of former seruices,
You shall do well, the fault of it Ile answer.

Ste. He's comming Madam, I heare him.

Gon. Put on what weary negligence you please,
You and your Fellowes: I'de haue it come to question;
If he distaste it, let him to my Sister,
Whole mind and minel I know in that are one,
Remember what I haue said.

Ste. Well Madam.

Gon. And let his Knights haue colder looks among
you: what growes of it no matter, aduise your fellowes
so, Ile write straight to my Sister to hold my course: pre-
pare for dinner. *Exeunt.*

Scena Quarta.

Enter Kent.

Kent. If but as will I other accents borrow,
That can my speech defuse, my good intent
May carry through it selfe to that full issue
For which I raiz'd my likeness. Now banish't Kent,
If thou canst serue where thou dost stand condemn'd,
So may it come, thy Master whom thou lou'st,
Shall finde thee full of labours.

Hornes within. Enter Lear and Attendants.

Lear. Let me not stay a iot for dinner, go get it re-
dy: how now, what art thou?

Kent. A man Sir.

Lear. What dost thou professe? What wouldst thou
with vs?

Kent. I do professe to be no lesse then I seeme; to serue
him truly that will put me in trust, to loue him that is
honest, to conuerse with him that is wise and faies little, to
feare iudgement, to fight when I cannot chioose, and to
eate no fish.

Lear. What art thou?

Kent. A very honest hearted Fellow, and as poore as
the King.

Lear. If thou be't as poore for a subiect, as hee's for a
King, thou art poore enough. What wouldst thou?

Kent. Seruice.

Lear. Who wouldst thou serue?

Kent. You.

Lear. Dost thou know me fellow?

Kent. No Sir, but you haue that in your countenance,
which I would faine call Master.

Lear. What's that?

Kent. Authority.

Lear. What seruices canst thou do?

Kent. I can keepe honest counsaile, ride, run, marre a
curious tale in telling it, and deliuer a plaine message
bluntly: that which ordinary men are fit for, I am qual-
lified in, and the best of me, is Dilligence.

Lear. How old art thou?

Kent. Not so young Sir to loue a woman for singing,
nor so old to dote on her for any thing. I haue yeares on
my backe forty eight.

Lear. Follow me, thou shalt serue me, if I like thee no
worfe after dinner, I will not part from thee yet. Dinner
ho, dinner, where's my knaue? my Foole? Go you and call
my Foole hither. You you Sirrah, where's my Daughter?

Enter Steward.

Ste. So please you —

Exit.

Lear. What faies the Fellow there? Call the Clot-
pole backe: wher's my Foole? Ho, I thinke the world's
asleepe, how now? Wher's that Mungrell?

Knigh. He faies my Lord, your Daughters is not well.

Lear. Why came not the slaue backe to me when I
call'd him?

Knigh. Sir, he answered me in the roundest manner, he
would not.

Lear. He would not?

Knigh. My Lord, I know not what the matter is,
but to my iudgement your Highnesse is not entertain'd
with that Ceremonious affection as you were wont,
theres a great abatement of kindnesse appeares as well in
the generall dependants, as in the Duke himselfe also, and
your Daughter.

Lear. Ha? Saist thou so?

Knigh. I beseech you pardon me my Lord, if I bee
mistaken, for my duty cannot be silent, when I thinke
your Highnesse wrong'd.

Lear. Thou but remembrest me of mine owne Con-
ception, I haue perceiued a most faint neglect of late,
which I haue rather blamed as mine owne iealous curio-
sities, then as a very pretence and purpose of vnkindnesse;
I will looke further intoo't: but wher's my Foole? I
haue not seene him this two daies.

Knigh. Since my young Ladies going into France
Sir,